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The Montreal YMCA
at the Heart
of the Community



ANNIVERSARY
PUBLICATION



We build strong kids,
strong families,
strong communities

www.ymcamontreal.qc.ca



Bringing
Quality to Life

Over the past twenty years, the general public has come to recognize the high-quality facilities and excellent physical fitness programs of the YMCA. We are proud of our facilities and fitness programs, because health is a key component of our mission. Yet the YMCA also offers a wide range of less-known community programs that reflect our mission and our most cherished values.

In the 10 YMCA centres throughout the metropolitan area, some 1,700 volunteers and 1,200 employees are dedicated to bringing quality to life to 100,000 people every year. Our strength lies in our ties with partners in the various communities where we have centres. Children, seniors, the underprivileged, families, new immigrants and at-risk youth can all find programs and services that meet their needs at the YMCA.



The YMCA's 150th anniversary in 2001 provides an ideal opportunity to highlight the contribution of our many volunteers and the strength of our community programs. In the pages that follow, we invite you to discover concrete illustrations of the Montreal YMCA's positive impact on the quality of life of individuals and communities.

The determination, values and aspirations of the people who are concerned with social justice and quality of life at the Montreal YMCA ensure that we are always growing and evolving. You may just find yourself swept up in the creativity and highly dynamic enthusiasm of the YMCA.

We hope you enjoy this special anniversary publication.

Sincerely,

Paul Dunne

Chairman of the Board



THE YMCA IS IN GREAT SHAPE

As president & CEO of the Montreal YMCA, Michael Weil heads up the largest community network in the metropolitan area. He explains why, after being established in Montreal for 150 years, the YMCA remains one of the most remarkable driving forces behind change at both the individual and community level.



Interview with Michael Weil,

PRESIDENT & CEO OF THE MONTREAL YMCA

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE YMCA IN TODAY'S WORLD?

MW: The YMCA is, above all, a community organization that draws its strength from its close ties with the individuals and community groups wherever centres are located on the Island of Montreal. Each centre reflects the needs of the local community, which explains why services are not the same in all YMCAs.

Our goal has always been and continues to remain the development of individuals within their environment through both education and prevention. Our physical fitness programs, which are undoubtedly the best-known aspect of the

or 20 years, because it evolves with the needs expressed by communities. That being said, the strategic planning exercise undertaken several months ago will certainly lead us to consider the development of new services in communities where there currently is no YMCA. Although we have not yet determined what form these services will take, we will explore options other than the construction of buildings that provide all the traditional YMCA services. For example, we may only set up a youth centre if that's what a community needs.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE MONTREAL YMCA PLAY IN THE CANADIAN NETWORK?

MW: The Canadian network of YMCAs is designed around the same model as local YMCAs — as a flat structure in which each component is independent. YMCA Canada does not manage the 63 YMCAs across the country. It's more of a mutual assistance network for all associations across Canada, and a place where we define our national service delivery standards.

Because of its significant size and large staff, the Montreal YMCA serves as a management resource centre for Eastern Canada. Every year, we offer training workshops for staff and volunteers in various associations throughout Quebec

and Atlantic Canada. We also offer certain services, such as the translation of pamphlets or management of certain programs, as well as the *Youth Exchange Canada* program for the Quebec and Atlantic Canada regions.

The Montreal YMCA, which is recognized for its multiculturalism and bilingualism, has built a reputation within the network for the vitality of its community development. Montreal has shown true leadership in this area and is considered credible, innovative and caring about the well-being of its clientele.

YMCA, are just part of our philosophy. Healthy and fit individuals have more energy and determination to improve their quality of life. As a driving force behind change, the YMCA promotes the self-empowerment and self-reliance of individuals and communities. To ensure that everyone can benefit from our programs and services, we have implemented an accessibility policy to enable low-income individuals to participate in our activities.

WHERE IS THE MONTREAL YMCA HEADED?

MW: The YMCA was founded long before most federal and provincial departments or municipal programs. As such, the organization is well aware of the public's expectations. For the past 150 years, the YMCA has constantly adapted to its environment. In that sense, it's hard to predict what the YMCA will be like in 15

1 8 5 1

First North American YMCA founded in Montreal.

1 8 5 3

Samuel Massey, the YMCA's first social worker, established *City Mission* to relieve the destitution and poverty of new immigrants to Montreal at a time when Protestant churches carried out this type of work.

1 8 7 3

After being a tenant for two decades, the YMCA erected its first

The YMCA increasingly began to develop its educational activities in cooperation with the American network of YMCAs. (The Canadian and American networks were managed jointly until 1912). Demand was so great that the YMCA soon had to consider moving to a larger building.

In 1890, several Protestant parishes opened their own YMCAs. Sports were introduced at the YMCA in the early 1890s.

The Montreal YMCA has experienced some minor and other major events related to the city's development over the past 150 years. Key events that made the front-page news are summarized below.

building. The Montreal Young Men's Christian Association and Bible House was located in Victoria Square at the heart of the business district. It housed one of

1 8 9 1

Construction of a new YMCA in Dominion Square with a gym and swimming pool.

1 9 0 4

Construction of the Pointe-St-Charles YMCA, which offered activities for the whole family — not just youth.

1 9 0 5

The McGill University YMCA moved to Strathcona Hall.

The Montreal network of YMCAs continued to expand, especially northward (Fairmount Ave.) and to the west (Côte Saint-Antoine).

1 9 0 9

The YMCA launched an extensive fund-raising campaign to better respond to the needs of Montrealers.

1 9 1 2

As a result of the fund-raising campaign, the Downtown YMCA was able to move to 1450 Stanley Street. The Westmount and Park Avenue community centres were

the city's first libraries. The YMCA's volunteers included William Dawson, Principal of McGill University, as well as civil and religious leader James Ferrier.

The YMCA began to diversify its efforts by developing activities for the young men who worked for the railway in Pointe-St-Charles. McGill University opened its own YMCA and sent two missionaries to India and Japan in 1889.

Celebrating 150 Years in Montreal

founded that same year.

The YMCA opened Camp Otoreke followed by Kamp Kanawana. It also contributed to the campaigns designed to improve life for children in the city, particularly with the opening of parks and playgrounds. At the time, the YMCA was responsible for training all monitors who worked for the Montreal Parks Service.

1925

The YMCA conducted an exhaustive survey on living conditions in Montreal and the needs of each community. The east end of the city was a source of increasing concern. From 1926 to 1935, the YMCA set up temporary operations in a building to meet the wide-ranging needs that arose toward the end of the 1920s.

1926

The YMCA's educational program led to the foundation of Sir George Williams College. YMCA programs were no longer for men only and became mixed.

During the Great Depression that followed the Crash of 1929, the Stanley Street building was erected and the Downtown YMCA was renovated. Centres opened in southwestern Montreal and Lachine. In Pointe-St-Charles, the YMCA supported the creation of 4,017 community gardens to the delight of some 16,000 people.

1940

Opening of the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce YMCA.

YMCA activities were disrupted from 1939 to 1945 when Strathcona Hall and the Pointe-St-Charles YMCA were requisitioned to support the war effort.

1949

The YMCA conducted its second exhaustive survey on social needs in Montreal.

1951

The YMCA celebrated its 100th anniversary. It had 7,031 members at the time. Aside from the Central YMCA (now known as the Downtown YMCA), the Montreal YMCA included five other centres.

1959

Sir George Williams College became Sir George Williams University. In 1973, Sir George Williams University and Loyola College joined forces to become Concordia University.

1960s

The YMCA adopted a new and broader mission, which included community development, family, health, leisure and outdoor activities. The YMCA also began orienting its activities toward prevention and social intervention (youth clinic and street workers).

1964

The YMCA, which had previously been open to Protestants only, began welcoming Catholics and the organization became bilingual. Activities drew 54,275 participants.

1969

First projects launched to welcome immigrants.

1970s

Social needs became more diversified. The YMCA had to adapt its programs, especially community action initiatives for families, women, youth, offenders and the elderly. The YMCA created local advisory councils to further promote active participation by the entire community.

1975

YMCA management adopted a policy of bilingualism.

1977

Opening of the St-Laurent YMCA.

1980 - 1990s

The YMCA focused its community development along four main lines: community justice initiatives, minority rights, urban development and employment. The number of partnerships was on the rise.

1980

Opening of the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve YMCA.

1981

Opening of the Pointe-St-Charles YMCA.

1984

Creation of the Montreal YMCA Foundation.

1986

Opening of the Guy-Favreau YMCA.

1988

Opening of the West Island YMCA Family Centre.

1989

Opening of the new Westmount YMCA building.

1993

The YMCA adopted a cultural diversity policy. The *P.A.I.R. program* (an individual assistance program for retirees) was created at the St-Laurent YMCA.

1994

Opening of the new Du Parc YMCA building

1996

Creation of the *Covered Garden*, a program to welcome refugees.

1998

The YMCA launched a major revitalization campaign. Objective: \$20 million. By the end of the decade, the YMCA had 1,200 employees, 1,700 volunteers, 25,000 members and some 100,000 participants.

2001

150th anniversary of the Montreal YMCA.

Opening of the fully renovated Downtown YMCA.



For the past dozen years, Jacques Luys, Vice-President of Desjardins Trust, has been a member of various Montreal YMCA committees and working groups. Despite a very busy professional schedule, how does he find time to contribute to the development of the YMCA? "I ask myself the same question," said Luys with a

such an impact on the lives of so many individuals and social groups in Montreal. "It's my way of making a small contribution," said Luys. "The YMCA's work is based on partnerships. The ties between the YMCA and its many volunteers from a variety of fields are what make the organization so effective."

Some volunteers started out as members of one YMCA before becoming more actively involved in the organization's management and advancement. Claire Lemieux, Director of Sales of the magazines *Elle Québec* and *Décormag* was a

The success of the YMCA largely depends on the invaluable contribution of its 1,700 volunteers who make their personal and professional experience available to the organization.



Invaluable Contribution of YMCA Volunteers

smile. "Actually, meetings are held early in the morning. And that gives me time to get involved without cutting into my workday." Jacques Luys, Chairman of the Local Advisory Council of the Guy-Favreau YMCA, is also chairing the centre's fund-raising campaign.

For this volunteer director, the YMCA's community work deserves to be supported, because it has

lifeguard in 1973. She is now a member of the Montreal YMCA's board of directors, and is helping organize the 150th anniversary celebrations. She says that, "the beauty of the YMCA is that it offers opportunities for growth to everyone. I work in a highly competitive field where there's not much room for humanitarian values. The work I do at the YMCA adds a completely different dimension to my life. I'm proud to be part of it."

Other people were drawn to the YMCA in different ways. Claude Garcia, Chairman of the Board of the Montreal YMCA Foundation, became aware of the YMCA's leading role while working at the

Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal. "People were already talking about the demolition of the Drummond Building in 1988," said Garcia. "The project was important to me. As I found out more about the YMCA, I discovered just how much the organization represented all Montreal communities."

People like Claire Lemieux who have volunteered their time for the past 25 years are quite common at the YMCA. Marcel Côté, Founding President of Secor also became a volunteer in the early 1970s. "It all started when they asked me to join one committee. One thing led to another and at this point, I have been involved in practically every aspect of the organization." Marcel Côté was

training and manager of internal sales in the aluminum parts industry. "I started by offering my services to my local YMCA. I became a member of the Montreal YMCA board of directors, then chaired the board from 1997 to 1999."

"I was convinced that I could add something to the organization's policies. Over the years, a number of people at the YMCA became a source of inspiration for me and helped me grow," said Jolicoeur.



The vast majority of volunteers are highly motivated by the staff's dedication and the way they foster YMCA values. "I get a lot more than I give. My gratification mostly comes from the pride I feel in being part of such a fine organization," said Lemieux.



chairman of the board of the Montreal YMCA for six years and is now the president of the Montreal YMCA Foundation. "The YMCA has changed in the last 25 years," said Côté. "First of all, it's far more French than it used to be. Secondly, while continuing to offer physical fitness activities, the YMCA has managed to retain its social orientation, decentralized structure and a service-based approach among its various clientele."

The YMCA's development is closely tied to the know-how and ideals of its volunteers. "I was enrolled at the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce YMCA and I felt like doing more," said Louise Jolicoeur, an engineer by

THE YMCA SCHOOL

The YMCA's 1,700 volunteers and 1,200 employees carry out a wide range and considerable number of tasks. Volunteers are naturally divided according to their areas of interest. Some 1,000 people volunteer in the physical activity area alone (for example, weight-room monitors and physical fitness instructors). Another 500 people work on community projects and special events. The other 200 volunteers are involved in the organization's management (board of directors, local councils, committees and working groups). Regardless of the nature of their involvement, all volunteers must attend a one-day orientation workshop.

"The workshop gives us the opportunity to provide prospective volunteers with a complete overview of the Montreal YMCA," said Benoît Tremblay, Director General of the Montreal YMCA Foundation. "We review everything that shapes the organization's character, including the history of the YMCA, our values, along with the various centres and services."

In addition to the workshop, the YMCA offers specialized training sessions, such as those for weight-room monitors or lifeguards. The YMCA also promotes staff advancement by offering ongoing training, especially for customer service. "We focus on being courteous and friendly with everyone who visits our centres, because we want people to feel at home. After all, every centre is first and foremost designed to serve its local community," said Tremblay.

On average, the YMCA *Residence* at the heart of downtown houses more than 400 refugee status claimants every 10 days. They are mostly referred by the Côte-des-Neiges CLSC's SARIMM, a Montreal-based organization that provides assistance to refugees and immigrants. People who are fleeing political unrest or institutionalized violence find the induction and

Point of departure: Africa, Latin America, Pakistan, Eastern Europe, Algeria, Southeast Asia... Destination: Montreal. At the end of their journey, a large number of families seeking refugee status find their first home on Canadian soil at the YMCA.



The YMCA — at the Cultural Crossroads of Multiethnic Montreal

integration resources they need at the Downtown YMCA, thereby enabling them to adapt to their new environment.

INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES

"The YMCA's *Covered Garden* program was designed around the specific needs of immigrants and refugee status claimants who have recently arrived in Montreal. With our team of staff, volunteers, trainees and numerous partners, we are able to offer workshops and activities that make it easier for refugees and their families to integrate into Montreal life," said the program's coordinator, Myriam Hamez.

For some people, their new life in Montreal is radically different from the one they have left behind. Everything is new and destabilizing from culture, family and social structures to food and the nature of relations with the authorities. "Refugees suffer from high stress," said Hamez, "and our role is to provide them with reference points to make their integration as smooth and quick as possible."

Theme-based workshops teach families about their rights and responsibilities as new immigrants. For example, they learn how to open a bank account, the role of the police, the main services to which they are entitled, and so on. Cultural and social outings round out the various activities, some of which are designed to enhance the socialization process for children, thereby giving asylum seekers greater insight into their new city. Every year, just over 1,000 people participate in the *Covered Garden* program.

A TEMPORARY HOME

During their first two to three weeks of living at the YMCA, refugees are required to carry out a number of tasks, such as applying for social assistance, finding an apartment, visiting a doctor and finding a lawyer. The *Residence* is an essential service, and not a long-term solution. In principle, families can only live at the *Residence* for a dozen days or so. However, families often have to stay longer, according to Pascal Alatorre, Director of the *Residence*. "The vacancy rate is low in Montreal, and it has

become increasingly difficult to find housing for refugees."

Managing human relations with so many different nationalities at the *Residence* requires patience and tact. Fortunately, the *Covered Garden* and *Residence* teams are well aware of the problems that can arise. Myriam Hamez believes that "when people receive a warm welcome, they integrate more readily. Refugee status claimants are the first to figure it out. Some of them even become volunteers to share their own integration experiences with their fellow citizens. Their success is reassuring for all the new arrivals."




INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE MONTREAL YMCA

In the 1990s, four Latin American countries became privileged partners of the Montreal YMCA: Ecuador, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. "Each centre is twinned with one specific country," said Sheila Laursen, Director of International Programs. "We have also begun negotiating a partnership with Haiti."

Twinning helps partners get to know each other better, while learning from each other. Community groups are particularly creative in Latin America and they know how to get along with next to nothing in the way of resources. "These people are a great source of inspiration and motivation for us," said Laursen. "In fact, I think we learn more than they do from these exchanges."

The YMCA organizes exchanges for young Montrealers in partnership with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In fact, the YMCA allocates a portion of its income to support the programs of its four partner countries. For every dollar donated by the YMCA, CIDA contributes \$1.50. On average, every YMCA in partner countries receives \$20,000 per year from the Montreal network. "The money isn't the most important thing," said Laursen. "The international contacts and experience abroad have a strong impact on our youths' perception of the world. In that sense, our efforts are primarily directed at giving them a whole new perspective on life."



The YMCA draws its strength from its solid roots in the community. What changes would you like to see in your life and in your community? The YMCA supports initiatives that help people develop their independence within their own environment.



Community Development at the YMCA

AT THE HEART OF URBAN NEEDS

Every community has its own dynamics, needs and characteristics. "Our main theme is to initiate or support projects that mobilize residents," said Geneviève Paquette, Co-ordinator of Community Development at the Montreal YMCA. "The people are the ones who decide what they want and do the organizing, but what do you do if you have no experience in the field? That's where the YMCA comes into play as a resource organization."

With its broad-based structure and extensive network, the YMCA can provide effective support to groups looking to carry out a project.

Having focused its efforts on four main areas several years ago — youth, families, employment, as well as social integration for the homeless, immigrants and social assistance recipients — the YMCA rarely turns down people who knock at its door.

“The hardest part is to maintain high motivation levels among individuals and groups trying to bring about change,” said Paquette. “Some people inevitably drop out along the way in every project, because they are overwhelmed by the amount of time and energy required. We are well aware of this obstacle. That’s why a lot of our efforts are aimed at supporting and fostering people’s initial interest. We adapt our support to address the specific difficulties groups need to surmount. In addition, our knowledge of government and private programs

places us in an ideal position to provide concrete assistance to groups by helping them find sources of funding.”

Over the years, community development directors in the various YMCA centres have surrounded themselves with the right people and resource organizations, which serve as an example and source of inspiration for communities. Furthermore, Centraide of Greater Montreal has supported the YMCA’s community initiatives since 1975. In this regard, the Du Parc and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce centres are among the most active in the field.



MADE-TO-MEASURE PROJECTS

Projects are invariably driven by community dynamics, and the YMCA helps people get organized. Since many projects already exist at the grassroots level, only some YMCA programs are offered in certain communities. For example, the *Artists’ Co-op* only exists in the Mile End. At the instigation of painter Stella Celli and author Isabelle Richard, some forty artists worked together in 1998 to establish a housing cooperative that would also include studios for artists. The housing aspect was not feasible for financial reasons, but the artists were able to obtain work spaces, a gallery located at 5345 Park Avenue, along with several street-level windows that display their works to passers-by and community residents.

In Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, a group of women joined forces to develop the *Aurora Business Project*, which offers loan circles and resources for entrepreneurs on employability and personal development. *Aurora* is designed around concepts like financial independence and training in personal financial management. The project has already helped train 275 women in the business world.

At the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve YMCA, efforts were made to develop activities that would initiate young girls in self-defence. And at the Guy-Favreau YMCA,

which is located in the heart of Chinatown, some aerobics and Tai Chi classes are taught in Chinese.

Sometimes groups lack the necessary strategic action skills and funding expertise. The YMCA places its network and tools at their disposal to help people flourish and grow within their own communities.



The St-Laurent YMCA offers the largest number of services to its youngest clients with a daycare for 55 toddlers, after-school activities, a toy-lending library and day camps. Parents can take a break and place their children in the hands of skilled and experienced staff.

"Our services reflect the needs of the community," said Sylvie Bouchard, Director of the St-Laurent YMCA. St-Laurent is generally considered a prosperous area, however, in the Norgate-Crevier

Some YMCAs offer programs with activities designed to stimulate young children, while bringing welcome relief to overwhelmed parents.



Childhood Development

FOR TODDLERS TO TEENS AT THE YMCA

district where we are located, most of the families are low-income."

St-Laurent is also the most cosmopolitan borough in the metropolitan area, because 46% of its population comes from 166 different countries. At the *Enfant-Soleil School*, a juvenile delinquency prevention program (*Leadership Program*) was specially developed for youth aged 10-12 from a variety of cultural backgrounds. The program has proven highly successful.

"Through well-planned group activities, the youth who participate in the program have a multiplier effect on their peers, while

gaining self-confidence and becoming aware of their role in society," said Bouchard.

The St-Laurent YMCA also launched a meals program at the Enfant-Soleil School where 350 hot meals are served every day during the school year. The students do more than just eat, since they also help distribute the food. "The children want to participate a lot, because it makes them feel useful, while benefiting from a program designed solely for them. We organize outings, small parties and a barbecue at the end of the school year to thank them for lending us a helping hand," said Bouchard.



In Pointe-St-Charles and Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, the *Help with Homework* programs meet a real need. Parents with little schooling often have difficulty helping their children with homework. The YMCA provides a much-appreciated break between school and home at a crucial time of the day when parents are not at home and school staff is gradually leaving the building. "Our program goes beyond help with homework," said Gail Dalglish, Director of Community Programs at the Pointe-St-Charles YMCA. "Our goal is to develop children's motivation and foster greater self-expression. Among other things, we organize visits to the Fine Arts Museum or to the



theatre and science workshops as well. We also maintain close ties with other community groups to make children proud of Pointe-St-Charles."

At the Du Parc YMCA, the *Enfantissimo* daycare welcomes preschoolers for half-days. The centre has also developed a number of workshops, including *Matinées Bouts d'Choux* and *Mother Goose*, which offer activities to help develop the motor skills of toddlers between 18 months and 3 years of age who are accompanied by a parent.



In all Montreal YMCAs, programs developed for young children are designed with the family in mind. Efforts are always made to involve parents, whether for planning services or accompanying children's groups on outings. Every year, approximately 5,000 people throughout the network benefit from the services designed for children and families.

PROGRAMS THAT MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

FIRST STOP

Like all major cities, 'Montreal attracts youth, people who are just passing through and strangers every year. The big city holds the promise of dreams fulfilled, success and sometimes even the opportunity to make a fresh start

for many. Yet new arrivals, especially youth and anyone with no fixed address, are easy prey for ill-intentioned people.

In 1998, *Le Bon Dieu dans la Rue* and *Passages* decided to address their concern about the increasing homelessness and rising crime rate among youth. They asked the YMCA to develop a program that would meet the needs of vulnerable youth and adults arriving at the bus terminal. The result was *First Stop*, a community assistance and referral program.

The YMCA is used to taking action in community development. For more than 20 years, a wide variety of partners have called upon the YMCA to help develop or jointly manage innovative programs.



YMCA Expertise and Experience in the Field

"People's needs are greatest when they first arrive in Montreal," said Henri-Charles Baudot, Coordinator of the program. "Vulnerable people are generally easy to spot by their behaviour, since they often appear distressed or to be in a state of crisis. Within a mere 24 to 48 hours, an innocent youth can be led astray or drawn into the criminal world. Our goal is to prevent this type of risky situation from arising at the bus terminal by referring youth and adults in transition to the best resources possible."

In the program's first 18 months of existence, *First Stop* street workers in the bus terminal approached more than 45,000

people, of which 10% needed some kind of assistance or referral. Seven days a week, twelve hours a day, two street workers are on duty at the *First Stop* counter. Part of their job consists in striking up a conversation with anyone who appears underprivileged, lonely or vulnerable. The street workers then tactfully inquire if they need help. If so, they refer them to the most appropriate organization — before newcomers even take their first step into the city.

“Our approach is truly prevention-based,” said Baudot. “The street workers are specialized in community outreach and can provide assistance to at-risk individuals right away. We are often faced with difficult problems like drug



trafficking, prostitution and drug addiction. Being able to react quickly and efficiently is crucial.”

The YMCA’s knowledge of community organizations and their management structures make it an ideal partner to develop and run a program like *First Stop*. Financed by the *Ministère de la Sécurité publique* and the City of Montreal, *First Stop* is in keeping with one of the YMCA’s primary missions, which is to welcome new arrivals to Montreal.

TANDEM MONTREAL: SAFETY FIRST

The quality of life in a community can be measured by its crime rate

and whether or not people feel safe. The *Tandem Montreal* program, which was launched in the early 1980s by the City of Montreal, adopted a community approach to crime prevention right from the start. The purpose of *Tandem Montreal* is to create a safe environment within the community through a series of awareness-raising, information and protection activities.

The beauty of the program is that it’s managed by local organizations, which are much closer to people’s everyday lives. The YMCA was asked to manage the program



in three Montreal communities: Pointe-St-Charles and Little Burgundy, downtown (in the St-Louis, Mile End and Ville-Marie districts) as well as the Park Avenue area.

In Pointe-St-Charles, the YMCA jointly manages *Tandem Montreal* with the organization *Prévention Sud-Ouest*. “Our initiatives are all outside the walls of the Pointe-St-Charles YMCA,” said Michel Magnan, Director of the Crime Prevention Program in Southwest Montreal. “Over the past ten years, we have visited no less than 40,000 people in their homes.”

The key to their success lies in

the YMCA’s solid ties with all community partners. The Pointe-St-Charles YMCA attends round table discussions that seek to improve people’s quality of life in the community, in addition to maintaining ongoing relations with the Municipal Housing Bureau, since the community is home to nearly one third of Montreal’s public housing.

Safety measures are developed according to the needs expressed by the community, which can include permanent marking of personal property, home security evaluations and the safe design



of public spaces. Over the years, local residents have changed their perception of the YMCA. The dedication of staff and volunteers combined with their efforts to improve the quality of life in the community make the YMCA an outstanding partner and resource.

Community (MUC) and under the aegis of the *Ministère de la Sécurité publique du Québec* since 1988. Fines can be related to municipal, provincial and federal offences or even the Criminal Code.

COMPENSATORY WORK PROGRAM

Putting people in prison because they cannot afford to pay a fine costs money and is not particularly useful. In 1983, the *Ministère de la Justice du Québec* launched a community service program that enables low-income individuals to pay off their fines by working for non-profit organizations (NPOs). The YMCA has administered this program, which is unique to the Province of Quebec, since 1984 throughout the Montreal Urban

"People who are unable to pay are often dealing with fairly serious problems. They can also be students or on income security," said Éric Lagacé, Director of the program since 1991. "We handle approximately 3,500 cases every year. Because we have ties with more than 350 non-profit organizations, we can determine which tasks people can perform for an NPO in their community. Assignments vary and can include accompanying people on errands or to appointments, as well as



office, manual or maintenance work. For most people, the opportunity to perform community service work is somewhat of a relief, because they can pay off their debt and get on with their lives.

Although people generally perform the requisite number of community service hours and return to their everyday lives, it's not uncommon to see them become volunteers in the same NPO afterwards. Whether they have worked in community centres, clothing banks or community kitchens, people find a way to be useful, which goes beyond the concept of community service work."

Since 1984, the YMCA has developed extensive expertise in the field in cooperation with the ROCRQ, a coalition of community referral organizations that groups together managers of the Fine Option Quebec program in 12 of Quebec's 13 regions. "A lot of organizations ask for accreditation so they can benefit from the program," said Éric Lagacé.

"Accredited NPOs must be able to provide proper supervision for the people we send them to ensure that work is carried out carefully and within the spirit of the program."

In addition to their strong listening skills, YMCA staff have an ability to engage in open discussion and take action — qualities that have served them well in



dealing with this type of non-voluntary work, which is no doubt why the YMCA has successfully managed the program for the past 17 years.

JOB INTEGRATION

Finding a job is not easy when you're in prison or on parole. The YMCA has worked in partnership with *Emploi-Québec* since 1985 to help adult offenders integrate into the job market.

"On average, 150 people are referred to us every year by their probation officer," said Richard Lavallée, who was with the YMCA for twelve and a half years before leaving to work for Oxfam Quebec

in August 2001. "After analyzing their situation and setting objectives, we help them with their job search. Our tools include unpaid training for a maximum of five days to explore different types of jobs. It helps candidates decide if they can apply their skills and are well suited to a given work environment."

The YMCA also offers training at Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines and Tanguay Prison to inmates who have nearly finished serving their sentence. Inmates work together in small groups to learn job-seeking skills and interview techniques. The program is carried out in partnership with the *Ministère de la Sécurité publique* and the *Fonds pour le bénéfice des personnes incarcérées des établissements de détention de Montréal*, a fund to help inmates in Montreal detention centres.

Since 1997, the YMCA has also managed a province-wide training program for youth in the federal public sector. The nine-month training period covers a wide range of activities and is directed at people aged 16 to 30. "Our target clientele consists of dropouts or youth with no high school diploma," said Lavallée. "Our role is to liaise between government departments and youth who want to enroll in the program."

Other programs are designed to help youth enter the job market. For example, *Downtown Ambassadors* is a completely new program that was launched in Summer 2001. In partnership with the *Société de développement commercial de la rue Sainte-Catherine*, the program gave 25 youth or income security recipients the opportunity to make the general public in downtown Montreal aware of the benefits of cleanliness, courtesy and safety in the urban environment.



For more than 15 years, the Du Parc YMCA Youth Centre has attracted 500 youth from all across town every year. "We make sure that the formalities and costs are reduced to a minimum," said Sandhia Vadlamudy, Director of the Youth Centre. "Registration is not required. One area is set aside for

from school to attend customized workshops for several days that deal specifically with their problems. Whether punctuality, anger management or motivation are an issue, all avenues are explored using a problem-solving approach.

In the past year, some sixty youth attended the sessions for three to five days at the Du Parc YMCA. The vast majority of youth only attend one series of workshops, which shows that the program meets the

Life is good for teens at the YMCA. Five YMCAs have created separate youth centres where teens can get together, have fun and meet program leaders who know how to listen to them without being judgmental.



YMCA Youth Services

**TEENS FEEL AT HOME
AT THE YMCA**

youth only, and they can access it through a door that is separate from the main entrance of the YMCA."

The YMCA offers more than pool tables and Nintendo consoles. Youth also find programs to help them get over the rough spots in their lives. For example, *Alternative Suspension* enables youth who have been suspended

expectations of youth, parents and schools. The Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and West Island centres were so impressed by the results that they followed suit last year and now offer the program in their neighbourhood schools.

At the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve YMCA, youth are also a major concern. In 1998, the centre created the *Young Community Leader Award* to underscore the commitment and sharing of a youth in the community. The centre also focuses on teenage girls. "We decided to organize self-defence classes for young girls, because it's an excellent way to develop self-esteem and become more affirmative," said Frédéric

Boisrond, Director of the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve YMCA. "It's also a useful prevention activity for the community."

Fifteen years ago, the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve centre was the first to set up a *Youth Services Co-op* in the YMCA network. The co-op consists of a dozen or so youth aged 13 to 18 who offer various services, such as house painting, baby-sitting, home maintenance and other similar work. In addition to earning some pocket money, the youth learn the basics of accounting, management, marketing and customer service. In short, they learn the everyday workings of a business. "The youth are very enthusiastic and generally stay with the co-op for three years," said Boisrond. There are now *Youth Services Co-ops* in the Du Parc, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and West Island YMCAs.

The Notre-Dame-de-Grâce YMCA opened its own teen centre in 1995. The relaxed atmosphere attracts youth from all over the city. "More than anything else, teens need a place they can call their own, where no-one will come and bother them," said Zane Korytko, Director of the NDG YMCA. "We have an incredible team, which makes all the difference. A number of our youth also become volunteers when they turn 18. It creates continuity and better rapport with the incoming group." Every spring, all staff members become volunteers for a weekend when the *March Madness* basketball tournament brings together close to 40 teams at the NDG YMCA.

The West Island YMCA is also very focused on its younger clientele.

The centre launched *Teen Night* to make its facilities available to youth aged 12 to 17 every Friday night of the year. Between the gym, swimming pool, and hip-hop dance classes, approximately 200 teens literally take over the place! This activity is held at the West Island YMCA only. Since programs are updated according to demand, new activities are available on a regular basis. "We're fortunate in that we can rely on a pool of approximately 70 volunteers," said Lois Van Beek, Coordinator of Children and Youth Programs at the West Island YMCA.

In addition to physical activities, the West Island YMCA organizes numerous forums for exchange and discussion among youth. Program staff and volunteers are always ready to offer a friendly ear.



C I R C U S A R T S

The aim of the *Circus Arts* program is to help youth from Pointe-St-Charles develop a sense of responsibility and taste for risk-taking. They learn juggling and acrobatics, how to use a trapeze and ride a unicycle, as well as balancing games and stilt-walking. "I knew some professional circus performers," said Gail Dalglish, "which gave me the idea for a project that would use the magic of the circus to develop the youths' self-confidence."

Two groups are formed every year. One is for children aged 8 to 12 and the other is for teens between the ages of 13 and 15. The groups train for two hours every week under the guidance of a specialized instructor. "We don't have any problem finding participants. The youth are more than enthusiastic about the program," said Dalglish.

Mrs. L. Tremblay (fictitious name), 82, lives alone in a charming little St-Laurent apartment. She is in good health, but has no children and few friends. If something happened to her, how could she be helped as quickly as possible?

Health is a key concern, regardless of age. At the YMCA, we know that exercise and an active social life prolong people's sense of feeling useful and living life to the fullest. The YMCA offers programs for seniors that help them continue to get the most out of life.



Seniors at the YMCA

AUTONOMY – THE KEY
TO A RICH AND ACTIVE LIFE

"P.A.I.R., an individual assistance program for retirees, was designed for people aged 55 and up who live alone," said Sylvie Bouchard, Director of the St-Laurent YMCA. "P.A.I.R. is an automated service that calls 450 subscribers every day at whatever time of day they choose. If no-one answers, the system tries two more times. The system warns us after three unsuccessful attempts. We then call a designated contact person or emergency services who will ensure that the person is not in any danger."

P.A.I.R. has saved lives. For the past ten years, it has helped reassure seniors by maintaining contact with the outside world. For a good number of people, it

has also served as a gateway to other YMCA activities.



The same service was launched

in Pointe-St-Charles on September 26, 2001.

The *Entre Amis* program is for people aged 55 and up. It includes a variety of activities, such as theme-based meetings, exchanges, cultural outings and physical activities that help keep people in good mental and physical shape. In partnership with the St-Laurent CLSC, the YMCA offers a personal growth program for people who live alone called *Vivre en solo*. "The same way as we encourage youth and families, our goal is to have seniors play a role in their community as well," said Bouchard. "Some seniors are in great shape and can contribute a lot to society, especially as volunteers."



The Pointe-St-Charles YMCA is also very active with seniors. Once a week for the past 15 years, seniors have participated in physical activities, gone on outings or simply played cards. The centre even organizes a camping week for seniors every year.



CUSTOMIZED PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

Everyone knows that being in good physical shape not only enhances muscle tone, but also helps maintain a positive attitude toward stress and the minor annoyances that are part of everyday life. With this in mind, most YMCAs offer training programs that are specially adapted to people over the age of 60, such as aerobics, aqua-fitness and weight training. Monitors, who are well aware of seniors' needs, are on site to encourage all participants in their efforts. Seniors also benefit from preferential rates at the YMCA.

QUIZ

Founded in 1851, the Montreal YMCA was the first YMCA in North America.

True or false?

True. The YMCA was founded in 1844 by Sir George Williams in London, England. The organization became known the world over at The Great Exhibition of 1851 in London. During that same year in Montreal, a group of young Protestants founded the Montreal YMCA. Toronto followed suit two years later in 1853.

The YMCA is so much a part of Montreal life that everyone thinks they know it well. Here is a short quiz to test your knowledge of the YMCA.



How much do you really know about the Montreal YMCA?

Physical activity has always been the YMCA's primary mission. In fact, the YMCA reaches the largest number of people in any given year through its physical fitness activities.

True or false?

False. Of the 100,000 Montrealers who participate in YMCA activities every year, approximately 30% are enrolled in physical fitness activities. The other 70% are involved in community development activities, take language courses, or are enrolled in the various training and information programs offered by the YMCA. Moreover, the first Montreal YMCA gym was only built in 1891, forty years after the Montreal YMCA was founded.

Women were only given access to YMCA educational programs in the 1950s.

True or false?

False. Educational programs were opened to women in 1926. All other services became mixed in the 1970s.

The YMCA Residence houses 400 refugees every 10 days.

True or false?

True. The *Residence* has served as a temporary home to refugee families that arrive in Montreal since 1984. Every ten days or so, more than 400 people from every continent spend their first days on Canadian soil at the *Residence*. In Fall 2001, the *Residence* was relocated to Tupper Street, near



Atwater in the former Reddy Memorial Hospital.

The YMCA has a long-standing tradition of supporting community gardens. Its *Covered Garden* program is particularly popular in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and Pointe-St-Charles communities.

True or false?

False. The YMCA supported the creation of more than 4,000 community gardens in Pointe-St-Charles during the Great Depression of the 1930s, but the situation has changed considerably since then. The *Covered Garden* program does indeed exist, but it is an information and

integration program of the Downtown YMCA intended for newly arrived immigrants and refugees to Montreal. The Notre-Dame-de-Grâce YMCA is the only centre to have a community garden today, called the *Cantaloupe Garden*.

The YMCA was at the origin of the founding of Montreal's Concordia University.

True or false?

True. The educational program developed by the YMCA in the early 1920s was transformed in 1926 to become an educational institute, Sir George Williams College. The college later became Sir George Williams University, then Concordia University after it joined forces with Loyola College in 1973.

By the 1960s, the YMCA already had more than 50,000 participants in its various programs.

True or false?

True. In 1964, a total of 54,275 participants were enrolled in YMCA programs.

All Montreal YMCAs have a gym and swimming pool.

True or false?

False. All YMCA centres offer health and physical fitness programs, but the Pointe-St-Charles YMCA does not have a swimming pool. From a community standpoint, centres tend to be different from one another, since services are designed around local needs and expectations.



Most YMCAs in Canada offer language courses and exchanges.

True or false?

False. Of the 63 YMCAs across Canada, only the Montreal and Vancouver YMCAs have a language school. In Montreal, classes are given at the Downtown and Hochelaga-Maisonneuve YMCAs. Approximately 3,500 people take language courses every year.

The latest major fund-raising campaign by the Montreal YMCA Foundation generated close to \$20 million for the revitalization of downtown facilities.

True or false?

True. Between 1998 and 2001, some 1,600 donors — employees, volunteers, companies and foundations — helped raise approximately \$11 million for the YMCA. The Governments of Quebec and Canada, as well as the City of Montreal each donated \$3 million. The completely new Downtown YMCA opened its doors in January 2001.

The Montreal Network of YMCAs



Downtown YMCA
1440 Stanley
Montreal, Quebec
H3A 1P7
Tel.: (514) 849-8393
Fax: (514) 849-7821
Peel metro

The Downtown YMCA is the cornerstone of the Montreal YMCA network. The centre is home to the widest range of services (for children, adults, seniors and refugees, including special programs and a language school) as well as most of the leading-edge programs like *Covered Garden* (for immigrants and refugees) and *First Stop* (for newcomers to Montreal). The complete renovation of the centre and its reopening in January 2001 led to a marked increase in membership, which rose from 3,600 to 6,300 in a matter of weeks!



Du Parc YMCA
5550 du Parc
Montreal, Quebec
H2V 4H1
Tel.: (514) 271-9622
Fax: (514) 277-9102
Parc or Place des Arts metro

Du Parc is one of the most dynamic YMCAs in community development. The centre, which was first opened in 1912, was renovated from top to bottom in 1994. In addition to the standard sports facilities, this YMCA has a youth centre, as well as a number of programs for teens and families.



Guy-Favreau YMCA
200 René-Lévesque West
Montreal, Quebec
H2Z 1X4
Tel.: (514) 845-4277
Fax: (514) 845-5688
Place d'Armes or Place des Arts metro

As the first YMCA that was solely oriented toward physical fitness, the Guy-Favreau YMCA nevertheless developed strong ties with the Chinese community over the years and formed partnerships with several community organizations in the Centre-South district of Montreal. The centre is located at the crossroads of downtown, the international business district and Old Montreal. A large percentage of the centre's clientele are business people who use the facilities before or after working hours.



Hochelaga-Maisonneuve YMCA
4567 Hochelaga
Montreal, Quebec
H1V 1C8
Tel.: (514) 255-4651
Fax: (514) 255-4882
Viau metro

The Hochelaga-Maisonneuve YMCA was first opened in 1980 and is the easternmost centre on the Island of Montreal. It is also the only centre to have an indoor skating rink that is open year-round. The centre offers a number of programs for teens, as well as language classes.



Notre-Dame-de-Grâce YMCA
4335 Hampton
Montreal, Quebec
H4A 2L3
Tel.: (514) 486-7315
Fax: (514) 486-6574
Villa-Maria metro

Opened in 1940, the NDG centre has the largest playing field in the YMCA network. For the past 60 years, the centre has developed strong ties with the local community — especially with youth who benefit from being close to one of the largest youth centres in Montreal. In addition to focusing on community development, the NDG YMCA hosts the well-known *March Madness* basketball tournament every year, which brings together some forty teams from the entire metropolitan area.



Pointe-St-Charles YMCA
255 Ash
Montreal, Quebec
H3K 2R1
Tel.: (514) 935-4711
Fax: (514) 935-1787
Charlevoix metro

Opened in 1981, the Pointe-St-Charles YMCA is the result of a merger of the Pointe-St-Charles and Southwest YMCAs. The centre is renowned for being extremely active in community development. Special efforts have been made to support youth, schools — through the *Help with Homework* program — and literacy training. The Pointe-St-Charles YMCA is the only centre to offer an introductory circus art workshop or night hockey and basketball games for the community's youth.



St-Laurent YMCA
1745 Decarie
St-Laurent, Quebec
H4L 3N5
Tel.: (514) 747-9801
Fax: (514) 747-9453
Côte-Vertu metro

Located in one of the most multi-ethnic areas of the Island of Montreal, the St-Laurent YMCA has the only toy-lending library and day-care (with a capacity of 55 children) in the network. The centre is also one of the leaders in services for seniors, especially with its *P.A.I.R.* program (launched in 1993) as well as other initiatives, such as a mutual assistance group, which is run by the retirees themselves.



West Island YMCA
Family Centre
230 Brunswick Blvd.
Pointe-Claire, Quebec
H9R 5N5
Tel.: (514) 630-9622
Fax: (514) 630-9868

West Island YMCA
Community Centre
99 Place Frontenac
Pointe-Claire, Quebec
H9R 4Z7
Tel.: (514) 694-9622
Fax: (514) 694-9627

The West Island YMCA is housed in two buildings (the Family Centre and Community Centre) making it the second largest centre in the Montreal network after the Downtown YMCA. Sports facilities are located in the Family Centre, including water slides! Offices are located in the Community Centre, as well as meeting and discussion areas where youth can talk openly among themselves and with program leaders. Every Friday evening, the Family Centre is solely dedicated to West Island youth for the *Friday Night Teen Program*.



Westmount YMCA
4585 Sherbrooke West
Westmount, Quebec
H3Z 1E9
Tel.: (514) 931-8046
Fax: (514) 931-9219
Atwater metro

The Westmount YMCA has been part of the everyday life of hundreds of Westmount families since it was first founded in 1912. It is unquestionably the community centre with the largest number of volunteers among its members. The centre was fully renovated in 1989, and has developed extensive expertise in services for young children, including music, swimming, dance and plastic arts. A number of pre-school programs are also very popular with the centre's younger clientele.



Kamp Kanawana (Saint-Sauveur)
1435 Drummond
Montreal, Quebec
H3A 1W3
Tel.: (514) 849-5331
Fax: (514) 849-5863

Opened in 1894, Kanawana is the oldest summer camp in Quebec. The camp, which is located near the village of Saint-Sauveur-des-Monts in the Laurentians, welcomes some 700 teens, boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 16 every summer. Campers stay for five to twelve days, depending on their level of experience and which nature activities interest them most. The site is also open to groups during winter.

1
1851
2001



YMCA

MONTREAL

Montreal YMCA
1435 Drummond, 4th floor
Montreal, Quebec H3G 1W3
Tel.: (514) 849-5331 Fax: (514) 849-5863
www.ymcamontreal.qc.ca